

WE THE PEOPLE . . . THE
CITIZENS AND THE CONSTITUTION

HON. DIANA DeGETTE

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 25, 2000

Mr. DEGETTE. Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize the We the People. . . . The Citizen and the Constitution program, and applaud the outstanding East High School students that came to Washington, DC, after winning the state competition and went on to win an Honorable Mention as one of the top ten finalists in the national finals. These young scholars have worked diligently to make it to the finals and their hard work has gained them a deep knowledge and understanding of the fundamental principles and values of our constitutional democracy.

The names of the students are: Adrienne Cassart, Emma Douglas, Kelly Durcan, Jill Friedman, Aaron Goldhammer, Jessica Harvey, Elizabeth Hultin, Matt Johnson, Casey Madison, Merrin McCabe, Emily Olson, Joe Pallett, Elisha Roberts, Evan Samples, Erica Simms and Grant Wylie. Additionally, I would like to commend their teacher Edna Sutton who deserves much of the credit for the success of this great team and recognize the District Coordinator, Loyal Darr, and the State Coordinator, Barbara Miller.

The We the People. . . . The Citizen and the Constitution program is the most extensive educational program in the country developed specifically to educate young people about the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. The three-day national competition is modeled after hearings in the United States Congress. These hearings consist of oral presentations by the students acting as constitutional experts before a "congressional committee" made up of a panel of judges acting as Members. The student testimony is followed by a period of questioning during which the judges probe students for their depth of understanding and ability to apply their constitutional knowledge.

I know first hand how well this program works because I was a volunteer coach for years at a high school back in my district in Denver, whose students have done extraordinarily well in the We the People. . . . competitions over the last decade. East High School has been among the top ten finalists most years since they have competed, and they won the competition in 1992.

Once again, I commend the East team for winning the state competition and winning Honorable Mention as one of the top 10 finalists in the national finals.

CELEBRATING SMALL BUSINESS
WEEK

HON. RUBEN HINOJOSA

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 25, 2000

Mr. HINOJOSA. Mr. Speaker, I rise as a member of the House Committee on Small Business and a former small business owner in celebration of the 37th annual Small Business Week.

What better time to recognize America's small businesses and their vital contribution to

our nation's well-being. With the advent of a new economy, it is especially appropriate to talk about how high-risk, fast-growing entrepreneurial firms are creating jobs and unprecedented economic growth across the country.

Our challenge is to spread the word across the country that we must do more to support and strengthen risk taking entrepreneurs in both big cities and small towns. In so doing, we will ensure that ever-accelerating global change remains our country's ally. Then we will continue to bring the benefits of our entrepreneurial economy home to every community in America.

IN HONOR OF THE RETIREMENT
OF REV. ROBERT T. STROMMEN

HON. DENNIS J. KUCINICH

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 25, 2000

Mr. KUCINICH. Mr. Speaker, today I honor the Rev. Robert T. Strommen on the occasion of his retirement after 41 years of ministry.

Mr. Strommen graduated from Princeton University in 1956, then went on to earn a master's of divinity from Union Theological Seminary in New York City. He was ordained in 1959, and served as pastor of St. John's United Church of Christ in Larimer, Pennsylvania for the next 7 years. In 1967, Reverend Strommen was called to Philadelphia, where he served as Minister of Metropolitan Mission for the United Church of Christ.

Throughout his many years of faithful service, Reverend Strommen has been active in community affairs. He received an award from the Greenburg-Jeanette Chapter of the NAACP for his services. In Philadelphia he worked with leaders of inner city congregations and developed Conference urban strategy. He also worked with the Philadelphia Welfare Rights Organization, the Action Alliance of Senior Citizens, and other community action groups.

Reverend Strommen began working with the United Church Board for Homeland Ministries in 1976, serving as secretary for Social and Urban Concerns. He was very involved in issues related to health and welfare and also coordinated the Board for Homeland Ministries' Minister of Metropolitan Mission program. In 1987, Mr. Strommen developed a program for training for mission outreach with local churches.

Since September, 1988, Reverend Strommen has served as association minister of the Western Reserve Association of the Ohio Conference. He continues to be involved in urban issues, and has served on the steering committee of the Jobs with Justice coalition in Cleveland.

Reverend Strommen has been a dedicated advocate for the working person's right to be treated with dignity and justice. He has set an example for us all with his tireless and energetic work in defense of workers' rights.

My fellow colleagues, please join with me on the occasion of his retirement in honoring the Rev. Robert T. Strommen for his dedication, faith, and commitment.

INTRODUCTION OF THE COMMUNITY PROTECTION FROM FIREARMS GIVEAWAYS ACT

HON. JOSEPH CROWLEY

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 25, 2000

Mr. CROWLEY. Mr. Speaker, last year, the House of Representatives failed to consider reasonable gun control and safety measures as part of legislation to combat crime. Despite the support of a majority of the House for reasonable measures, the Republican leadership has consistently refused to debate the numerous gun proposals introduced in the House.

Common sense gun control measures such as a three business day waiting period for background checks, closing the gun show loophole, requiring gun locks to be sold with firearms, and a ban on the importation of large capacity ammunition clips are all reasonable approaches to gun control and safety. However, more can and must be done.

That is why I am being joined by Representatives TOM CAMPBELL, GREG MEEKS, BARBARA LEE, NEIL ABERCROMBIE, ELIOT ENGEL, SHEILA JACKSON-LEE, GRACE NAPOLITANO, JAN SCHAKOWSKY and LOUIS GUTIERREZ in introducing bipartisan legislation, the "Community Protection from Firearms Giveaways Act," to close yet another dangerous loophole in Federal gun control laws.

As unbelievable as it may sound, our current gun control laws allow criminals to win guns at raffles without having to go through a criminal background check. This must be stopped.

Our legislation will amend U.S. law to require winners in a lottery where a firearm is the prize to pass a background check at a licensed gun dealership. The gun dealership may charge a reasonable fee as prescribed under current law for this service. Additionally, the Community Protection from Firearms Giveaways Act has a carve out exempting the background check if the lottery winner has a current gun owners permit, or if the check takes more than 5 business days.

Mr. Speaker, I believe we can all agree that giving away guns as prizes poses a serious danger to our communities. Requiring a background check on a lottery winner if a firearm is the prize is sensible and should be required under Federal law.

Our communities deserve to be protected from criminals with easy access to guns. While gun safety measures will not stop violent crime, it must be a key component of any anti-crime strategy addressed by Congress.

I would urge my colleagues to cosponsor this important legislation.

H.R.—

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Community Protection from Firearms Giveaways Act".

SEC. 2. EXTENSION OF BRADY LAW TO FIREARMS WON IN LOTTERIES.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 922 of title 18, United States Code, is amended by inserting after subsection (y) the following:

"(z)(1) It shall be unlawful for an individual who is not a licensed importer, licensed manufacturer, or licensed dealer to transfer a firearm won in a lottery (as defined in section 1307(d)) to the winner, unless—

"(A) a licensed dealer contacts the national instant criminal background check system established under section 103 of the Brady Handgun Violence Prevention Act;

"(B)(i) the system provides the licensee with a unique identification number; or

"(ii) 5 business days (meaning a day on which State offices are open) have elapsed since the licensee contacted the system, and the system has not notified the licensee that the receipt of a firearm by the winner would violate subsection (g) or (n) of this section; and

"(C) the individual and the licensee have verified the identity of the winner by examining a valid identification document (as defined in section 1028(d)(2) of this title) of the winner containing a photograph of the winner.

"(2) The rules of paragraphs (2), (3)(A), (4), (5), and (6) of section 922(t) shall apply to a firearm transfer assisted by a licensee under this subsection in the same manner in which the rules apply to a firearm transfer made by the licensee."

(b) PENALTIES.—Section 924(a)(5) of such title is amended by striking "or (t)" and inserting ", (t), or (z)".

TRAGEDY AT THE LOWE'S MOTOR SPEEDWAY IN CONCORD, NC

HON. ROBIN HAYES

OF NORTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 25, 2000

Mr. HAYES. Mr. Speaker, I know I speak for millions of Americans who were relieved to learn that no fatalities were suffered in the tragic accident that occurred in my hometown of Concord, NC this past weekend. As many of you know, a pedestrian bridge at the Lowe's Motor Speedway collapsed injuring 107 people last Saturday night after the NASCAR Winston stock car race. In time, I hope that investigators will determine the cause of the accident. Today, however, I want to recognize the men and women who provided emergency response to the accident and prevented what could have been a substantial loss of life.

Unfortunately, two individuals remain in critical condition, and I know you will join me in praying for their swift recovery. But amazingly, the other 105 individuals treated for injury are in stable condition or have already been released from the hospital. Mr. Speaker, this kind of emergency medical response speaks volumes about the quality of our professionals who represent the EMS and law enforcement. Doctors, nurses and medics from the greater Charlotte area have not treated this many people from one serious accident in recent memory. And yet their rapid, on-site medical attention to the victims of this catastrophe demonstrated a superior degree of preparation and training.

Most of our local medical facilities were represented in this miraculous effort. We in North Carolina owe a debt of gratitude to the fine staffs of Rowan Regional Medical Center, Carolinas Medical Center, the University Hospital and Presbyterian Hospital. In particular, Mr. Speaker, I want to recognize NorthEast Medical Center in Concord. It is my understanding that under the leadership of my friend Larry Hinsdale NorthEast's handling of this major emergency was flawless.

THE PUTIN PATH: ARE HUMAN RIGHTS IN RETREAT?

HON. CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 25, 2000

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, two days ago, the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, which I am honored to chair, held a hearing entitled "The Putin Path: Are Human Rights in Retreat?" I was pleased to be joined on the dais by my colleagues on the Commission, Co-Chairman Senator BEN NIGHORSE CAMPBELL, Senator TIM HUTCHINSON, Ranking House Member Representative STENY HOYER, and Representative MATT SALMON.

As part of the hearing, the Commission had also planned to feature a video-conference with Moscow-based Radio Liberty journalist Andrei Babitsky. As Members are aware, Mr. Babitsky was arrested by Russian authorities for allegedly "participating in an armed formation," as a result of his reporting from besieged Grozny last year. Subsequently, as a civilian, Babitsky was "exchanged" to Chechen forces in return for certain captured Russian military personnel, and is not permitted to leave Moscow. Unfortunately, technical problems precluded the possibility of the videoconference, but Mr. Babitsky provided a written statement for the hearing record. Mr. Babitsky was recently awarded the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly's prize for journalism, and as head of the U.S. Delegation to the OSCE PA, I hope that he will be able to attend the award ceremony at the Assembly's annual meeting in Bucharest this July.

Tuesday's hearing was one of a series of hearings the Commission has held to examine human rights issues in the States of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. The mandate of the Commission is to monitor and encourage compliance with the provisions of the Helsinki Accords and successive documents of the OSCE.

As I have noted on previous occasions, Russia is no longer the dictatorial, closed society that it was during the Soviet period, and certainly there are countries around the world where human rights are in much more perilous straits. I have yet to hear of a working church in Russia being destroyed by bulldozers and wrecking cranes, as was the case last November in Turkmenistan. And we know that in China religious believers of many faiths are thrown in jail for simply desiring to worship without government interference.

Indeed, under the administration of President Yeltsin, human rights activists were able to achieve significant gains in making respect for human rights, if not a standard, at least a consideration in public policy. There is growing concern, however, that Russia's development in the area of human rights is taking a turn for the worse under recently-elected President Vladimir Putin.

The testimony of Igor Malashenko, First Deputy Chairman of the Board of Directors of Media-Most and President of NTV, summarized how their offices were the target of the infamous raid by government agents on May 11 last. Mr. Malashenko described how the agents carted away documents, tapes, computer discs and equipment, and subsequently issued "contradictory and unsatisfactory jus-

tifications" for this raid. Moreover, he provided extensive information on several other less-publicized examples of violence and intimidation toward media outlets and journalists throughout Russia.

General William Odom, former director of the National Security Agency, and a man of exceptional expertise in things Soviet and Russian, noted that Russia is a "weak state" and suffers from a lack of institutions capable of providing the level of civil society and economic development that we had hoped would follow after the collapse of the Soviet Union. General Odom also suggested that the United States should not treat Russia as a major power, or think that much of Russia's internal problems can be solved by "ventriloquism" from the West.

Professor Georgi Derluguian of Northwestern University asserted that President Putin is the product of the KGB network that survived the collapse of the Soviet Union. In order to seek a distraction from the Chechen quagmire, suggested Professor Derluguian, Putin will most likely launch a massive anti-crime campaign. I would note that when Yuri Andropov and his KGB began to assume power in the twilight of the Brezhnev regime, part of the crackdown on political dissent at that time was under the guise of cracking down on corruption.

Ms. Rachel Denber, Deputy Director for Europe and Central Asia at Human Rights Watch, testified that in Grozny, "the graffiti on the walls reads 'Welcome to Hell Part Two.' The bombing campaign has turned many parts of Chechnya into a wasteland even the most experienced war reporters we, have spoken to told us they have never seen anything in their careers like the destruction of the capital Grozny." Ms. Denber also described summary executions of civilians, including the death of three generations of one family shot to death in the yard of their own home.

One of the brighter aspects of civil society under President Yeltsin was the expansion of NGO activity. However, Professor Sarah Mendelson of the Fletcher School of Diplomacy and Law at Tufts University noted that there is in Russia today "an atmosphere that is hostile to civil rights activists, and in fact, anyone with opinions that differ from the Kremlin's. While "the treatment of Andrei Babitsky in January and February was shocking and disturbing, and the FSB raid on MediaMost in May was brazen," she testified, this is "part of a larger pattern of harassment that has grown steadily worse over the last year and a half."

In this connection, I would like to point out another proposal made by Professor Mendelson in her testimony. She suggested that President Clinton, while in Moscow next month at the Summit with President Putin, should meet with activists who are promoting human rights and democracy in Russia today. This gesture, she notes, "would send a signal not only to those in Russia who care about democracy but to those in Russia who do not." I believe this idea is right on target. In fact, Mr. HOYER and I have written to the President noting that this year is the twenty-fifth anniversary of the signing of the Helsinki Accords. We have encouraged the President to meet with the surviving veterans of the Soviet-era human rights struggle, and with their contemporary colleagues, in both Moscow and in Kyiv, where the President plans to meet